

Bulletin 7/25/1978

2 Assassinations

Look No Different

Washington — Assassinations, anybody?

The game has long since lost its morbid fascination for most Americans, but here comes the all-star investigative playoff on President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

On Capitol Hill, whatever goes up in a resolution must come down in hearings. In September 1976 the House ordered an investigation of possible assassination conspiracies. Two years, \$5 million, 1,500 interviews and five internal donnybrooks later, the House Select Committee on Assassinations is planning to tell what it has found out in a month-long series of hearings. This is offered as a television spectacular to start in mid-August, when Congress leaves town.

OVER THE WALL of secrecy, intended to maintain suspense, there wafts information indicating that the committee may be building up to a let-down. The conspiracy buffs of the grassy knolls and the stop-action films will be disappointed. What the committee has been able to prove is largely unsensational, and what is sensational it has been largely unable to prove.

When all the medical and ballistic evidence has been laid out through witnesses and exhibits, it should be more certain than ever that the triggers were pulled by Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray — just as officially established. Perhaps the most interesting development is an indication that Ray acted not out of any personal hatred for Dr. King but as a hired gun for certain Southern racists whose names are now apparently known.

Oswald's motives remain as clouded as they ever were. The committee has unearthed evidence of multiple cover-ups and deceptions by Moscow, by Havana and by American intelligence agencies, but without being able to establish that anything more sinister was being covered up than their efforts to extricate themselves from implication in the assassination mess.

Daniel Schorr

For example, the committee has new evidence that the KGB maintained intensive surveillance of Oswald while he lived in Minsk. This conflicts with the testimony of the defected KGB officer, Yuri Nosenko, that the Soviet security organization stayed completely clear of him: (Nosenko, with a new identity, has agreed to testify in public only if he is not seen.) To clear up the KGB connection, the committee asked the cooperation of the Soviet Embassy, which, in effect, told the committee to get lost.

But even if the KGB did maintain surveillance over Oswald, what would that prove, other than that he wasn't trusted? (Nosenko said that Oswald was, for a while, suspected of being a CIA agent.)

THE COMMITTEE BELIEVES it got a runaround from Fidel Castro and other Cuban officials. Castro denied that he knew of a specific CIA plot against him involving one of his lieutenants when he warned, in September 1963, of reprisals against American leaders. Castro also indicated to the committee that Oswald was treated as a nut when he came to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City later that month. Manuel Asque, the consul who talked to Oswald, was not even sure any more that it was Oswald he dealt with.

But the committee has evidence that Oswald not only visited the embassy, but, after hours, dated Silvia Duran, Asque's assistant, and had contacts with other pro-Castro Cubans in Mexico.

Interesting, but far from proof that Castro commissioned the assassination of President Kennedy.

Perhaps a written report would have sufficed to present the slim pickings, but then, since everything about this grim era has been theatrical, why not a theatrical last chapter — if only it IS the last chapter?